PERSPECTIVES FROM THE CONTESTED TERRAINS OF AFRICA: Intellectualism, Development and Social Movements

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INTRODUCTION

Contested terrains in Africa are inherently linked to struggle. Historically, the struggles led by African martyrs focused on first generation rights which revolved around the attainment of political freedom, civil rights, and equality before the law. Presently, struggles of the second and third generations have taken on a more socio-economic and solidarity focus respectively. It is the multifaceted struggles for these human rights which provide fertile ground for persistent contestations in Africa's most vital terrains. In this paper, three crucial elements are identified as critical broad themes within which contestations are expressed. These themes inevitably have a ripple-effect on almost all issues which touch the daily lives of the African population. As such, these terrains have significant implications for rethinking development in the region. To be sure, alternatives for development in the South will stem from the resolving of these contestations. Until these contestations are

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resolved in favour of African perspectives, development in Africa will continue to follow Western theories, which have hitherto borne limited success.

Firstly, the paper begins with an analysis of intellectual paradigms in African and examines the unwavering divide between binary academic epistemologies. This is followed by an evaluation of how these epistemologies influence development theories, policies and practices specifically by explaining the antagonism between orthodox and alternative approaches. Lastly, the role of social movements, who are seen to uphold novel solutions to issues concerning Africa, is evaluated. It is noted that social movements are heterogeneous in nature, and it is deemed that an assessment of their existential nature is necessary. The paper argues that the dominance of non-African scholars in the African intellectual space renders development in Africa to be designed according to non-African ideologies and paradigms. Whilst social movements represent a revolt against this, they are alas not intrinsically progressive, which deems an assessment of their existential nature necessary. The theory of epistemic disobedience is applied as a framework to understand the agenda of orthodox development practices inherent within modernisation. This grand narrative is branded as a sophism due to its historical and persistant failures on the African continent.

AFRICAN STUDIES

Contestations in the discipline of African Studies underlie the multifaceted developments of political change in Africa. Several epistemologies and knowledge paradigms have prescribed appropriate methodologies for, and determined the grounds and boundaries of legitimate knowledge to the study of Africa. Ways

of knowing Africa are paramount to understanding the vibrant (and sometimes vicious) contestations which, on the one hand, have occurred among divergent theoretical perspectives, and, on the other hand, between Africanist scholars of different origins. The main theme in this section is an examination of the epistemologies and paradigms that inform various scholars' understanding of Africa. Essentially, at the heart of the contested terrain of African Studies lies the dogmatic character of epistemologies which render differing theories incompatible and even mutually exclusive – somewhat representing them as binary opposing forces.

The 'Self' and the 'Other' Binary

The Slave Trade is the foundation for the creation of the self-other binary between Europeans and Africans, as it marked a significant stage in the building of European global supremacy. Besides the various physical atrocities to which African people were subjected, they also became victims of mental colonisation through the "civilising" agenda of European colonialists. The basic foundation of every contestation and every activity that formed the relationship between the Western settlers and the African natives lay within the notion of the 'self' and 'other' binary. The European self was

> Symbiotically linked to the negation of the self . . . the process of determining *what* constitutes [all] things European required formulating what *does not* constitute such phenomena. The tale of the unfolding of such identity is known as *European modernity* with the other side of the same coin being the geopolitical significance of 1482 (GORDON, 2006, p. 423, emphasis by author).

The "self" and the "other" binary opposite has its roots in the contradictions and conflicts that exist between traditional Western and traditional African epistemologies. Mudimbe and Appiah (1993) provide one explanation of where the heart of this division lies: on the one hand, the advanced, civilised mentality of the West which promotes reason and logical rules, positively faces the new and the unknown in order to apprehend and integrate it into its own order of knowledge; on the other hand, the African universe is primitive, and founded on a prelogical mentality which does not actualise the principles of identity, and non-contradiction; it instead functions on a mythical thinking which is essentially neophobic as it favours its own traditions and past. This binary continues to be manifested in various wasy today – largely due to the inapplicability of Aristotle's logic of syllogism to African human relations.

Aristotelian logic declares that *X* is either *A* or *negative-A*; and can by no means represent both values, as the two cannot coexist, let alone form a symbiotic relationship. So, where *A* equals the grand narrative of modernisation theory advocated by the European "self", *negative-A* must be the complete opposite of this, which would equal the scientific socialism advocated by the African "other". This effectively means that *negative-A* is excluded from the boundaries of knowledge; it is considered non-existent and is completely ignored in discourse. In contrast to the above, African philosophy is pivoted on a unique social structure underpinned by a holistic philosophy. Because it is a holistic logic, there can be no rules or laws of contradiction; therefore its logic is constructed as follows: *A* can be *A* as well as *negative-A* at the same time. Differences are not ignored, but are recognised, as it is understood that these differences cannot render phenomena mutually exclusive, because neither ought to be perceived as evil or threatening. To be precise, *A* and *negative-A*

are the same elements in perpetual embrace for existence; in other words, they reinforce and live alongside one another.

It is suitable to further clarify this contradiction by contrasting the maxims of Western philosopher Rene Descartes and his African counterpart John Mbiti which respectively proclaim that: "I think therefore I am"; and "I am because we are; because we are therefore I am". The basic tenets of each of these dictums are autonomy versus communalism – principles which lend themselves to the support of capitalism within Modernisation theory, and socialism within Marxist theory respectively. Contestations in African Studies are essentially grounded on this epistemological disparity.

Inikori (2006) provides a detailed analysis of this antagonism which has been evidenced in many a 'truth' proclaimed in various scholarly works. He argues that the Slave Trade gave rise to debates in which the participants (usually those of Western descent on the one side and those of African descent on the other) historically accused one another of being "ideologues". He attributes this resentment for two reasons: first, the creation of a racist ideology borne from European supremacy and African oppression; and, second, the ridiculous magnitude of inhumanity experienced during the slave era. According to Inikori (2006), these two historical events produced fertile ground for persistent suspicion between the two categories of scholars. Western scholars refuse to be held responsible for something so shameful, whilst African scholars promote the Dependency theory which puts responsibility for Africa's underdevelopment squarely on the shoulders of Western nations. This is all true in the historical sense and is still applicable in many ways today.

Inikori (2006) further argues that the level of sentimentality shown by the scholars is a feature of conceptual confusion and paradigm limitations because scholars charge one another with being

ideological in the construction of their arguments. To paraphrase Inikori's (2006) explanation, scholars claim that their colleagues are not committed to a scientific process of discovering the truth in a scholarly inquiry, but, instead, they deliberately conduct their analysis in a manner that will lead them to a preferred (and often preconceived) conclusion. For him, all this antagonism is misguided and futile, as in his own understanding, all scholarship is ideological because the evolution of paradigms entails a significant measure of prevailing societal values which have given shape to ideologies. In this way, the problem does not only lie in the existence of ideology, but lies in the practice of "ideologically motivated" research which undermines or totally ignores existing evidence that counters a given ideology (INIKORI, 2006, p. 49).

Boundaries of Legitimate Knowledge

Kom (2000), espousing a constructionist approach to knowledge, articulates that the notion of "paradigm" emphasises that legitimation, even scientific, cannot be built up outside the social framework that inspires the research. In his own words, he fails to fathom, "How… African research, and even research on African topics, [can] be validated outside Africa itself?" (KOM, 2000, p. 1). This is, indeed, a telling statement. Upon deeper consideration, however, it raises questions about the role of scholars in the African Diaspora. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Aime Cesaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* are but two poignant intellectual contributions to which spring to mind. Kom (2000) further argues that Africans are guilty of idealising Western values and have thus not made a concerted effort to create uniquely African paradigms.

To be sure: African intellectuals suffer from colonised mindsets. Ashcroft similarly asserts that an autonomous framework of knowledge must be derived from some sense of identity and that this sense seems to be irresistibly drawn toward the (self-other, superiority-inferiority) representation installed by imperialism. This argument could perhaps explain the continued dominance of Western paradigms in African Studies. In the same vein, Dongala (2009) proclaims that academic innovation has not been seen in Africa since the days of Ujaama, Panafricanism and Negritude, apart from South Africa's initiation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission research archives (DONGALA, 2009, p. 6). All these scholars agree that the knowledge-power nexus is still hugely in favour of the West – ostensibly a result of the unequal distribution of wealth. In many ways the West continues to exploit African resources (intellectual exploitation is one form of this abuse).

Gordon (2006) categorically declares that "scholarship itself is conditioned by the centering of modern European academic culture" (GORDON, 2006, p. 418). He argues that no matter how unique a formulation may be (referring to the religion and nation of Islam as one example), it still operates "within predominantly... [European] practices and processes of legitimation" (GORDON, 2006, p. 418). What are these legitimation processes in the academia: are they exclusively scientific and/or social? Whatever the answer, in reality it is clear that all non-Western worldviews have been relegated to the periphery.

In a similar fashion, Mudimbe and Appiah assert that,

> What organises the nineteenth-century [and continues to do so in the current century] *episteme* . . . is fundamentally a Western paradigm of knowledge: Western experience actualises history, reason, and

> civilisation. The colonising vocation of the West ... and its corollary Christian missioning, posit a basic and curiously ethical necessacity: to bring into conformity the variety of existing cultures and mentalities in the world (MUDIMBE; APPIAH, 1993, p. 118).

It is, however, important to note that capitalism and socialism have transcended ethnic boundaries. Europeans who are pro-labour support the popular notion that "an injury to one is an injury to all", as much as Africans who are pro-labour do. Likewise, Africans that are capitalist support a *laisser faire* economic system as much as European capitalists do. This has been another angle which the many contestations in African Studies have taken. As Alison Jones (2012) explains, social science paradigms are peripatetic – a paradigm's exclusivity depends on the "the unquestioned assumptions from which its practitioners draw strength ... and weakness" (JONES, 2012, p. 23). It cannot be doubted that many scholars today draw their strength and weakness from socio-economic experiences over and above political constructs. This is greatly influenced by the pervasiveness of globalisation in all its elements.

Implications for Development

It can be concluded that contestations within the field of African Studies have predominantly occurred between Western and African scholars whose realities and epistemologies have led them to believe in divergent theories for Africa's development. The West still holds significant power over Africa and continues to unduly influence the discourse on African Studies in favour of Western paradigms that are unwilling to accommodate African ways of thinking and being, despite the recent wave of universalism in

the academic sphere. Nonetheless, Gordon (2006) suitably concedes that African Philosophy is thriving and seems to have been able to negotiate its place between the polar ends of imperialist and relativist approaches within the study of Africa. Unfortunately, this progress has not been entirely positive as African scholarship still gets pushed to the periphery in the discipline of African studies and the European scholars jealously guard their core position within the field. The outcome of this has been a clear division between two cleavages in the study of Africa as illustrated by Korang (2006) in his article on the "posts" in African Studies.

Europeans, seeing themselves as representing the ideals of normalcy and normatively correct ways of existence, inevitably resulted in the West strongly promoted the Modernisation theory as the only truth amongst methods of development. The USA was positioned as the ideal developed nation, "proven" by the collapse of the Soviet Union as the Cold War came to an end. The lack of an alternative paradigm to Western hegemony thereafter rendered the entire continent of Africa underdeveloped and in desperate need of European intervention that would guide it in its quest to implement the theory of modernization. As a result research is based on the quest to advance theories on why Africa deviates from the (Western) norm instead of concentrating on finding out what Africa's patterns and realities are.

Whilst it is recognised that development theories have been adapted to suit different material conditions over time, it is of concern that their "grand narrative" nature, as fostered by advocates on either side, continues to aggravate contestations.

SUPREMACY OF THE WASHINGTON CONSENSUS AND FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVES: Unpacking Post-development

The idea of "grassroots postmodernism" in development is one upon which the theory of "Post-development" is founded (ESTEVA; PRAKASH, 1998 apud HART, 2001). In building our understanding of the theory, some other related theories will also be briefly reflected upon in order to establish an extensive comprehension of the Post-development model. It can be extrapolated that the vision of the Post-development approach is primarily to dispel the hegemony of the Washington Consensus paradigm of development and to allow each separate country (or any given area therein) the space to determine their specific development path. In more precise terms, the model does not envisage "development alternatives but [pursues] alternatives *to* development" (ESCOBAR, 1995, p. 215 apud ZIAI, 2004, p. 1046). Post-development thus refers to a wide assortment of dissident views which are nonetheless "united by [their] antagonism to [capital "D"] Development as a normalising, deeply destructive discursive formation emanating from 'the west'" (HART, 2001, p. 654). In this way, Post-development theory is engaged in an epistemological and ontological warfare to weaken the universal validity of western (little "d") development theories.

The deep-seated tension between Post-development and the Washington Consensus lies in the polarised understanding of two issues in particular: the first is the problem of defining development and hence being able to identify its indicators, which leads to the second discontent of determining the necessary policies and implementation strategies for achieving the given set development goals. On the one side, the Washington Consensus view equates development to economic growth and prosperity through modernisation, to be

achieved in the course of the careful implementation of investment plans which are initiated and supervised by professional economists and the like (FINE, 2009). What follows is the proverbial "trickle-down effect". While on the other side Post-development understands that people are the object of development, implying indicators that measure a person's well being (e.x.: health, literacy, life mortality, etc) which should be achieved through the involvement of those same people in development programmes that will nurture the necessary basics of human life (PARAYIL, 1996).

To this end we can observe some similarities with Dependency theory which also "speak[s] of a change of paradigm… in relation to established theories of development" (BLOMSTROM; BJORN, 1985, p. 36). However, Dependency theory stems from a distinctly neo-Marxist analysis of the international political economy. In contrast, post-development, "can be interpreted as [neither] a neo-populist nor as a neo-liberal project, but as a product of radical democracy" (ZIAI, 2004, p. 1056). This means that the agenda of the global South is articulated in broader terms than just class politics and is extended to include the transformation of "super structural" fields such as gender relations, culture, and so on through self-determination (ZIAI, 2004, p. 1056). Another fundamental difference is that of state control versus the devolution of power as it relates to development strategies and implementation. Whereas dependency theory is chastised for encouraging a *dirigiste* dogma, post-development is criticised for valorising unfeasible levels of decentralisation. Both are further criticised for not offering enough, if any, constructive criticism of existing development theories (ZIAI, 2004, p. 1056), a critique most relevant to the "reactionary populism" strand of post-development which focuses most of its attention in building anti-Western societies (NANDA, 1999 in

ZIAI, 2004). Both theories are however very clear about the need for revolutionary activity that is led by a grass roots movement as opposed to a single (almighty) vanguard authority. Post-development discourse specifically encourages civil society activity through social movements.

Handler (1992: 697) points out the relationship between "postmodernism" (which can be understood as an overarching discourse for post-development) and (new) social movements quite profoundly, describing postmodernism as a phenomenon of "subversion – the commitment to undermine dominant discourse" whilst social movements are an embodiment of this insurgence. This view coincides with the one expressed by Rahnema (1997a: xif cited in ZIAI, 2004, p. 1046) who utilises similar terms such as "subversive", "people-centred", and "radical" to describe the post-development phenomenon. The idea of participatory development is strongly advocated by some post-development scholars who admire the Kerala scenario as an *ipso facto* example of sustainable development instead of relying on *a priori* knowledge to establish a post-development theory (PARAYIL, 2006). However, Mohan and Stokke (2000) warn against the dangers that emerge out of the implementation of participatory development – in particular, they discuss issues pertaining to politics and power in the local context. Nevertheless these points remain very critical in relation to the Washington Consensus model of development which is founded on the basic tenets of modernisation and economic growth (FINE, 2009).

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

It is suggested in this paper that the question to contemplate given the longevity of the Modernisation theory – as measured by

"its failure to succumb to the laws that Marx had laid down for it" (BURAWOY, 2004, p. 198) – must become one that presupposes a need to boldly reconstruct the Marxist philosophy in order to align it to current material conditions. Accordingly, to borrow one of Burawoy's assertions; there must be a "shift from [the] politics of class to [the] politics of recognition" (BURAWOY, 2004, p. 193). It is thus held in this paper that at the current juncture social movements must place themselves at the forefront of the battlefield; taking their directives from the ideological principles of the once-vanguard left who remain a binary opposite of capitalism.

This will allow institutional and substantive issues to be responded to in the most befitting manner possible – rather than utilising strategies that are exclusively "organized" or 'spontaneous' – the attainment of which, in the eyes of Frantz Fanon, can be emancipatory to the contemporary revolutionary (GIBSON, 2003). The World Social Forum is believed to hold the potential to respond to the hostilities of the present system at both the level of its "waves" and their "ripple effects". Moreover, in spite of many criticism, it is regarded in this paper as an entity that is able to hold its own within the "multitude" (a concept also without its fair share of disapproval).

On the other side of the diagram there is another battle being waged by social movements against the more direct form of accumulation; that which is fundamentally achieved through the dispossession of the poor and the least powerful in society – not only the workers. These forces aim to re-establish the old ways of life by regaining all that they have lost to the capitalist system. Its agents are located in general society consisting of distinct groups and agendas – unavoidably, at times conflicting. They oppose "the commodification of cultural forms, histories, and intellectual creativity", in the name of tradition (HARVEY, 2003, p. 148).

According to Harvey's analysis, social movements do not have a coherent way forward; rather than attacking the very force which dispossesses them (i.e. capitalism) they are infatuated by their need to "protect the ancient order" (HARVEY, 2003, p. 165). And so their battle is constrained to material dispossession without taking into cognisance the institutions of power.

Advancing the analogy of seeing capitalism as a coin (pun intended) sheds light on its historical career which has continuously flipped back and forth from being market, to power based with the inconspicuous ease of fluidity. In this sense we come to understand how today "original accumulation constitutes[s] an important and continuing force in the historical geography of capital accumulation through imperialism" (HARVEY, 2003, p. 143). As Harvey aptly puts it, during the Imperialist expansion, 'export of power followed meekly in the train of exported money' (HARVEY, 2003, p.142). This implies that the face of the coin is analogous with "money", whilst its tail end can be viewed in the same vein as "power". Just as the probability of spinning a coin landing on either heads or tails are split halfway, no one can ever be certain which of the aspects of accumulation (direct or indirect) will be applied in any geographical or temporal setting. To this end, Harvey (2003) critically reflects on historical narratives to convincingly provide numerous examples that substantiate his notion of "accumulation by dispossession" – the most notable of which is perhaps the 2008 global economic recession as a result of financial *('mis')*speculation and other parallel schemes (HARVEY, 2003; WALLERSTEIN, 2010).

It is suffice to say that David Harvey's notion of accumulation by dispossession is one that is necessary to take heed of if any gains in the fight against capitalism are to be made moving forward. Similar ideas have naturally been brought forward in numerous texts,

including Desai (2002) cited in Ballard et al (n.d:418) and Wallerstein, (2010) to name but two. In addition, Harvey's sentiments to encourage an alliance between the working class formation and social movements, under the banner of "progressives" is compelling. Yet, whilst it is appropriate that we are critical of the ability of social movements to counter capitalism; Harvey's distrust in social movements should also be taken with a "grain of salt". His critique is based on the strong belief that such movements frequently exploit their heterogeneity as they outright reject being "guide[d] towards a more universal valency than the local... [by] often refus[ing] to abandon their particularity". This makes social movements vulnerable to being misdirected by "non-progressive" forces, such as the ones discussed above. All this makes their inclusion under the 'homogenising banner of the multitude' that Harvey speaks so sinisterly of – hazardous – if not myopic. A caveat is provided nonetheless, as it is added that "ways must be found to acknowledge the significance of... [the] multiple identifications [that social movements possess]" (HARVEY, 2003, p. 179).

The critique he offers is by no means immaterial, and is evidently not unique, as seen in Marcuse's critical analysis of the subject and the several rebuttals/responses to this in 2005, in a distinguished publication of the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (Allahwala and Roger; Bond; Conway; Kohler; Ponniah; and Marcuse a and b). One of the main outcomes that is vigorously in line with Harvey (2003) to have come out of the above deliberation has been their questionable ability to constructively advance substantial socio-political-economic agenda*(s)* on a global scale. Globalisation epitomises neoliberal capitalism, and so anti-systemic agents (as social movements and forums have unanimously been described in this debate) would, arguably, do well to engage a considerable part of their efforts on a global level as opposed to

being excessively localised. They should simultaneously of course take care to not limit their critique of neoliberalism to "globalisation, 'Washington Consensus' macroeconomic policies", etc (BOND, 2005, p. 436, emphasis by author); lest they unwittingly fall into a "silo" analysis trap which somewhat separates development discourse from other more grassroots realities (e.x. environmental preservation, gender equality, youth empowerment, etc.).

THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM: A Force to be Reckoned With?

By responding to neoliberal policies at both the level of waves and ripple effect – action otherwise referred to as "scales of social change" in Kohler (2005) first, second, and third generation rights can all be pursued concurrently and in coalescence. In fact, reflecting such a multi-dimensional approach to creating "a new world" as it were, the World Social Forum (WSF) is described as the othe "superpower" against neoliberalism (ALLAHWALA; ROGER, 2005; PONNIAH, 2005). This section therefore endeavours to provide evidence to showcase how the WSF, through its constituent bodies, has grappled using multifaceted, yet congruent, approaches against the harsh effects of neoliberal policies. In addition, it is held that the WSF commands its own gap within the "multitude": at a stretch it effectively counters the abstractness of the multitude concept; and in the very least it is not easily obliterated by it.

Prospectively, the WSF could successfully interchange between the resistant reformisms of social movements, and the revolutionarily transformation of the labour formation – an idea suggested in Ponniah (2005) upon reflecting on the tactics of the Norwegian Social Forum (NSF). Even though in retrospect – perhaps due to the way it has operated thus far – the WSF has mostly

been portrayed as more biased to reformist politics. Nonetheless, in this paper its very existence as an entity implies the strengthening of new pedagogies of resistance-cum-revolution. The shared experiences, of different movements on a global scale, has proven to be teleological in a way that Marxism has ostensibly never been able to be (considering its requisite mutation and reconstruction as the philosophy has been transported across space and time). It is perhaps a manifestation of revolutionary pedagogy which "creates a narrative space set against the naturalised flow of the everyday… giving rise to both an *affirmation of the world* [by the subject] through naming it, and *an opposition to the world* through unmasking and undoing the practices of concealments" (MCLAREN, 2000, p. 185, emphasis by author). As Bond stresses, "What is surely the main accomplishment of the WSF is the construction of *dialogical* spaces" (BOND, 2005b, n.p, emphasis by author).

CONCLUSION

The position of the West representing the meta-ideology of the twenty-first century makes it necessary to first begin with an evaluation of Africa's ability to uphold its own unique ideologies in order to understand the foundation upon which ideas for alternative development can be based. It is arguably inadequate to respond to a topic on rethinking development without taking into cognisance the epistemologies and paradigms which determine boundaries of knowledge in the current century. Given the heterogeneity of the challenges faced by Africa, it is seen as best to engage in dialogue that promotes a decentralised and non-dogmatic pursuit of development. In this regard, social movements, as epitomised by the World Social Forum are regarded as vital catalysts to achieving this.

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses three crucial terrains of contestation which weave together the kaleidoscopic tapestry of Africa's contemporary development challenges. An assessment of academic epistemologies in African Studies, development theories, and the potential of social movements who espouse alternatives for development, illustrate why Africa's position continues to be peripheral. A twenty-first century evaluation of Africa's relationship with the West, when paying close attention to the aspects of intellectual discourses and knowledge paradigms, at best, provides reasons for guarded optimism, and at worst, raises serious concerns for the attainment of unorthodox development in Africa. The article argues that the dominance of non-African scholars in the African intellectual space renders development in Africa to be designed according to non-African ideologies and paradigms. Whilst social movements represent a revolt against this, it is assessed that their heterogeneous nature deems them neither intrinsically nor collectively progressive. The theory of *epistemic disobedience* is applied as a framework to understand the agenda of orthodox development practices inherent within Modernisation. This narrative is branded as a sophism due to its historical and persistant failures on the African continent. Until these contestations are resolved in favour of African perspectives, development in Africa will continue to follow Western theories, which have hitherto borne limited success.

KEYWORDS: African Studies. World Social Forum. Development alternatives.

RESUMO

O continente africano tem sido caracterizado por contestações fervorosas e conflitos violentos de diversas naturezas, desde tempos imemoriais. Este artigo discute três terrenos cruciais de contestação que tecem desafios contemporâneos do desenvolvimento da África. Uma avaliação das epistemologias acadêmicas em Estudos Africanos, teorias de desenvolvimento e o potencial dos movimentos sociais que defendem alternativas de desenvolvimento ilustram porquê a posição da África continua a ser periférica. Uma avaliação do século XXI sobre a relação da África com o Ocidente, quando prestando atenção aos aspectos de discursos intelectuais e aos paradigmas do conhecimento, na melhor das hipóteses, fornece razões para otimismo; e, na pior das hipóteses, levanta sérias preocupações para a conquista do desenvolvimento heterodoxo da África. O documento argumenta que o domínio dos estudiosos não africanos, no espaço intelectual africano, torna o desenvolvimento na África a ser projetado de acordo com as ideologias e paradigmas não africanas. Enquanto os movimentos sociais representam uma revolta contra isso, nota-se que a sua natureza heterogênea os considera nem intrinsecamente, nem coletivamente progressiva. A teoria da desobediência epistêmica é aplicada como um quadro para entender a agenda de práticas de desenvolvimento ortodoxo inerentes a modernização. Esta grande narrativa é marcada como um sofisma devido as suas falhas históricas e persistentes no continente africano. Até que essas contestações sejam resolvidas, em favor de perspectivas africanas, o desenvolvimento na África continuará a acompanhar as teorias ocidentais, que têm transmitido sucesso até então limitado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Estudo africano. Forum social mundial. Alternativas de desenvolvimento.